

There are  
made or el  
the U, if  
no by?

God has given to us, I know well, the liberty of use, but only so far as necessary; and He has determined that the use should be common. And it is monstrous for one to live in luxury, while many are in want. How much more glorious is it to do good to many, than to live sumptuously! How much wiser to spend money on human beings, than on jewels and gold! How much more useful to acquire decorous friends, than to acquire costly ones. It remains for us, therefore, to do away with this allegation: Who, then, will have the more sumptuous things, if all select the simpler? Men, I would say, if they make use of them impartially and indifferently. But if it be impossible for all to exercise self-restraint, yet, with a view to the use of what is necessary, we must seek after what can be most readily procured, bidding a long farewell to the superfluous.

Miguel  
Pacheco

San Tom  
Luis

Y las  
mujeres  
latinas

### Liberation Theology: A Cultural Synthesis

Rafael Catala

### La mujer chicana y la justicia económica

Lydia Hernández

!?

In fine, they must acceptably rid themselves off ornaments as girls' gewgaws, rejecting adornment itself entirely. For they ought to be adorned within, and show the inner woman beautiful. For in the soul alone are beauty and deformity shown. Wherefore also only the virtuous man is really beautiful and good. And it is laid down as a dogma, that only the beautiful is good. And excellence alone appears through the beautiful body, and shines out in the flesh, exhibiting the amiable comeliness of self-control, whenever the character like a beam of light gleams in the form. For the beauty of each plant and animal consists in its individual excellence. And the excellence of man is righteousness, and temperance, and manliness, and godliness. The beautiful man is, then, he who is just, temperate, and in a word, good, not he who is rich. But now even the soldiers wish to be decked with gold, not having read that poetical saying:

"With childish folly to the war he came,  
Laden with store of gold."<sup>1</sup>

El Antiguo?

But the love of ornament, which is far from caring for virtue, but claims the body for itself, when the love of the beautiful has changed to empty show, is to be utterly rejected.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 5: 872.

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## PRESENTACION

Al completar los primeros seis años de publicación de nuestra revista, nor regocijamos en poder ofrecerles a nuestros lectores un índice de esos seis años. Le agradecemos al Rev. **Raúl Fernández Calienes**, pastor presbiteriano en Denver, el haber hecho el trabajo básico para ese índice.

El Dr. **Rafael Catalá**, a más de poeta y ensayista, es editor del "Index of American Periodical Verse." La Sra. **Lydia Hernández** trabaja en las oficinas nacionales de la Iglesia Presbiteriana, con responsabilidad especial en lo referente a la justicia y reconciliación raciales. El artículo que aquí publicamos fue presentado ante una asamblea de damas presbiterianas.



# Liberation Theology: A Cultural Synthesis

*Rafael Catalá*

**W**hen we begin to think of ourselves as oppressed peoples, and begin to reflect about a path to liberation, our initial question may be: what is the first step? For every path has a beginning, and this first step is, perhaps, the hardest to take.

We must liberate ourselves first. The first enemy of oppressed people is within themselves. Paulo Freire has rightly said that oppressed people have the oppressor installed in their consciousness, because they have been indoctrinated with sets of false values. These values operate at the unconscious level. We have an enemy within us of which we are not aware. Therefore, the first step to take is our own re-education and that of our children. Here is where "education" has to take place, and "instruction" must be placed under its umbrella. This must be a very conscious effort on our part. When we become aware of these principles, we will realize how practical they are. In fact, the principles discussed in my earlier article lack one very important thing: a program that will put them into practice.

As oppressed peoples we have begun a liberating process. For instance, Martin Luther King, Jr., has been, and is, a tremendous force of liberation. In theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez has led the way, along with King's praxis. In education, Paulo Freire has developed the tools necessary for this liberation. We cannot do without any one of them, because they are all integral parts of our individual and collective being. We must study the works of these leaders and intellectuals very closely, individually and in group study. Their work is not dogma, but the first steps of our own liberation. We must continue building the road. Thus we must see their works as textbooks of liberation.

The important works of Gutiérrez and Freire give us a program, a blueprint to guide our first steps. We must think of education in its broadest sense: a process of liberation. It is not only the education of our children, but our own education, or better, our re-education.

Freire's theories are not difficult to understand. They equip the individual with very practical means to engage in a process that I call **conscious evolution**. Freire's method begins with the integration of the individual to his or her national reality. One begins the process of consciousness awakening from the reality of one's own oppression. You must become creative with the situation at hand. By knowing backwards and forward the cause and effect of your reality, you will discover how to transform it. It is a dynamic process geared to awaken you.

This educational approach differs from the traditional in that it does not "domesticate" the individual. Rather, it begins by helping us discover how we are an alienated element of the society in which we live. It is an approach deeply imbedded in ethics, and its main purpose is to achieve a total transformation of the oppressed person, so that he or she can become a co-creator of society. Freire provides us with the critical means to achieve our full potential, a process that he calls "education as the practice of freedom." Here we may find, as Robert Browning says in one of his poems, a way for the "imprisoned splendor to escape."

In **Pedagogy of the Oppressed**, Paulo Freire has written that "reflection --true reflection-- leads to action."<sup>1</sup> This statement describes what has taken place in Latin America. What is recognized today as a major trend in Christian thought and practice is the re-examination and reflection of two of the major currents of thought in Western and European cultures: Christianity and Marxism. When these two currents of thought first converged in Latin America, they underwent a major mutual evaluation which has led to a new movement. These two currents have been traditionally considered mutually exclusive. But upon re-examination, those

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<sup>1</sup>New York: Seabury, 1968, p. 52.



confronting societies in process of transformation recognized this encounter as the birth of the "new man/woman" --as has been stated by Father Camilo Torres, José Carlos Mariátegui, Paulo Freire, Father Gustavo Gutiérrez, and so many other writers, freedom workers, thinkers, philosophers and theologians, and as José Martí foresaw in his essay "Nuestra América" in 1891.

This "new man" or "new woman" has been evolving its own worldview since the European culture met with such American civilizations as the Aztec and the Inca, to name only two, and later on, with the African. To use José Vasconcelos' term, Latin Americans are the "synthesis" of these civilizations, and through a syncretic process a new person has been brought about whose worldview is only now coming to fruition. Seen from this perspective, we can better understand liberation theology.

Christianity and Marxism meet in the concept of alienation, a concept that is central to Marxist thought. Eric Fromm states that

Alienation (or "estrangement") means, for Marx, that man does **not** experience himself as the acting agent in his grasp of the world, but that the world (nature, others, and himself) remain alien to him. They stand above and against him as objects, even though they may be objects of his own creation. Alienation is essentially experiencing the world and oneself passively, receptively, as the subject separated from the object.<sup>2</sup>

Since the European conquest of America, alienation in Latin America has resulted from a method of economic organization based on exploitation and domination. Indians, Africans, and Creoles were made tools to effectuate the movement of wealth from the Americas to Europe. Most of the castles and cathedrals in Europe, from the Renaissance on, were built with the gold stolen from the Americas. The wealth that American men and women brought about stood "above and against" them, even though it was created by them. Later on, the landowners and industrialists --and presently the

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<sup>2</sup>Marx's Concept of Man (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1966), p. 44.

multinational corporations-- replaced the European oppressors. Yet, they continued the act of deliberately "estranging" these peoples, all for economic gain. This historical evolution estranged religion from its people to the point that Catholics, and later Protestants, had to re-evaluate the basic moral premises upon which the Church had been founded. In many ways the official church structure was no longer serving the interest of the vast majority of the population, since these peoples were estranged from the economic mainstream and wealth of their own countries. The question arose, then, whom is organized religion serving? At this point --where self-alienation was realized as both a cause and an effect of the state of poverty-- Christianity and Marxism shook hands.

This realization brought with it a process of re-evaluation of Christianity that went back to the very roots of Christian belief. In this task, Christians were aided by the biblical concept of idolatry:

The essence of what the prophets call "idolatry" is not that man worships many gods instead of only one. It is that the idols are the works of man's own hands --they are things; that man worships what he has created himself. In doing so, he transforms himself into a thing.<sup>3</sup>

It became clear that the church was serving an upper class that was --and is-- deliberately oppressing the men and women Jesus came to serve and to redeem. Within this context, a Christian reads the words of Christ in the New Testament and is confronted with a reality that has to be resolved in order to live a full and fulfilled Christian life. The same happens with Marxism. Contrary to popular belief, Marxism

is concerned with the liberation of man from a kind of work which destroys his individuality, which transforms him into a thing, and which makes him into the slave of things. Just as Kierkegaard was concerned with the salvation of the individual, so Marx was, and his criticism of capitalist society is directed not at its distribution of income, but its mode of production, its destruction of individuality

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 44.



and its enslavement of man--worker and capitalist--by things and circumstances of their own making.<sup>4</sup>

Upon re-examination the Latin American Christian saw that both systems of thought search for human freedom from the circumstances created by some humans. Both systems of thought --when properly examined and understood-- try to free humans from estrangement and alienation. Thus, the struggle against oppression from dictatorships, landowners, etc., has caused both thought systems to merge into one force of liberation.

This synthesis is not isolated from other developments that have been taking place in the world. Another syncretic element that has introduced itself into this equation is modern physics. This new scientific development has helped to bridge the gap between Christians and Marxists.<sup>5</sup>

The decade of the 1920's saw a major breakthrough in the field of physics: "the beginning of relativistic quantum field theory, which was the merger of relativity and quantum theory."<sup>6</sup> As Heinz Pagels states,

The microworld and indeed the whole world could be viewed as a vast arena of interacting fields. Previously, physicists imagined the world was divided into matter and energy. The matter resided in particles and the energy in fields that interacted with the particles, causing them to move. Now a unified view was established. The dualisms of energy

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<sup>4</sup>Idid., p. 49.

<sup>5</sup>This subject is not discussed by any liberation theologian of whom I am aware; but a hermeneutical analysis of the social and intellectual context of the theologians would reveal that the ideas about to be discussed are part of their immediate environment. The poetry of Ernesto Cardenal has been influenced by it. An example of this influence is his poem "Condensations-- And a Vision in San José de Costa Rica," where the new cosmological theories are present.

<sup>6</sup>Heinz R. Pagels, *The Cosmic Code: Quantum Physics as the Language of Nature* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), p. 269.

and matter, particle and field, were dissolved, and everything could be seen to be interacting quantum fields. There isn't anything to material reality except the transformation and organization of field quanta --that is all there is. This marked the ultimate triumph of the field concept in the human attempt to comprehend reality.<sup>7</sup>

This new way to understand reality could help us understand how the perception of matter, of opposites -- of materialism and spiritualism, for example-- have been changing. Such views have furthered the dialogue between Marxists and Christians by eliminating the dualism that made such dialogue impossible. Gutiérrez, for instance, points out the need to eliminate the dualism that has permeated European religious thought.<sup>8</sup> Just as Freire eliminated the dichotomy of reflection/action in his phrase quoted above, that "reflection --true reflection-- leads to action," the new man or woman of the Americas has begun to "pronounce the world, to change it," in a cultural synthesis that expresses a syncretic vision of the world.

### Summary

*Mexican-American women have been exploited from the beginning of the Spanish conquest, and that exploitation has continued with the American conquest. Through it all, Mexican-American women have been strong and have survived. Protestant Mexican-American women feel particular contradictions. It is now necessary to join with others who are poor and oppressed, both in the U.S. and in the rest of the world, in order to live out the cross and the resurrection.*

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 269.

<sup>8</sup>A Theology of Liberation (New York: Orbis, 1973), p. 57.



## La mujer chicana y la justicia económica

*Lydia Hernández*

**P**ara poder hablar de la mujer chicana y la justicia en la economía hay que comenzar por nuestra historia. Si no sabemos de dónde venimos, no podemos saber a dónde vamos. Somos el producto de una invasión europea y de la colonización y esclavitud de los indios.

En este país bien se celebra el día de la llegada de Cristóbal Colón a esta parte del mundo. Pero hasta hoy todavía no tenemos un día de fiesta para los indígenas, los pueblos que habían habitado estas tierras por miles de años. Los europeos trajeron su religión, su sistema de economía, su modo de comportamiento y vida social. Al conquistar estas tierras, los españoles pudieron imponer su sociedad sobre la que ya existía. Como la mayoría de ellos eran hombres, tomaron a las indias como sus mujeres y raramente como sus esposas. De ahí nacimos nosotros, los mestizos. La iglesia que los españoles trajeron nos ha dejado la tradición de aceptar la autoridad, especialmente la autoridad del varón. Y casi siempre, especialmente dentro de la iglesia, ese varón fue blanco y europeo. Además, del sistema económico impuesto por los españoles surge la práctica de tener patrones. Y casi siempre los patrones son de piel blanca, porque así eran ellos, y los trabajadores de piel morana, como los indios. Por tanto, desde el principio, como mujeres mexicanas y mestizas, fuimos forzadas a concebir hijos bajo condiciones de explotación. Fuimos las esclavas de la casa, limpiando, mientras el patrón se ocupaba del trabajo de fuera de la casa, usando a los indios en el campo para que hicieran el trabajo laboral. En medio de toda esa historia, tenemos que admirar a nuestras antepasadas por haber sobrevivido. Si no fuera por su valor y aguante, no estaríamos aquí.

Quienes estamos aquí somos americanas de descendencia mexicana, y presbiterianas. ¿No les parece raro esto de ser mexicanas y presbiterianas, en lugar de católicas? A mí hasta se me hace difícil decir "presbiteriana" en español. Lo que ocurrió fue que cuando los anglos llegaron a Texas ya estábamos aquí, y ellos nos trajeron su religión. En su libro sobre la historia de nuestra iglesia, García-Treto y Breckenridge dicen que el anglo vio la necesidad de darnos su religión porque según ellos éramos flojos y sin religión. Ellos nos iban a americanizar para salvarnos de nosotros mismos. En otras palabras, para tener buenos trabajadores. El mensaje de las buenas nuevas vino con un mensajero explotador. Por eso, para mí, el hecho de ser presbiteriana y mexicana es una contradicción.

Pero en el centro de la historia de la salvación está la contradicción de la cruz. Sin la cruz, las buenas nuevas no lo son. Si nuestra cruz es ser chicanas y presbiterianas, tiene que haber buenas nuevas para nosotras. Podemos transformar el mal que se intentó en un bien. Como ha dicho el Dr. Jorge Lara-Braud, una de las reacciones a nuestra contradicción ha sido disculparnos ante nuestros hermanos católicos; la otra es definirnos como anti-católicos. Para mí la respuesta a la contradicción va a requerir aprender bien el español y nuestra propia historia. Si bien el español fue la lengua del colonizador, ahora tenemos que usarlo para defender nuestra historia y cultura. ¡Qué lindo sería para mí conocer de las mujeres luchadoras y valientes que participaron de esa historia! Como hoy día tenemos a Dolores Huerta, que defiende a su pueblo campesino, a Rebeca Flores en Tejas, a Lupe Anguiana que trabaja por las secretarias, y a la Srta. Rivera que ha luchado por las mujeres dentro de LULAC, una organización mexicano-americana.

¿Que importancia tiene esto para la justicia económica? Aunque se nos haya explotado, las que estamos aquí somos privilegiadas entre las mujeres de nuestra raza. Como cristianas, tenemos que amar al mundo que Dios ama tanto que envió a su único hijo para su salvación. Por ello, las siguientes estadísticas son importantes. Como mujeres de color:

\*ganamos 10% menos que las blancas



\*nuestros esposos ganan 25% menos que los blancos  
\*25% de nosotras presta servicios caseros (de las blancas, el 16%)

Esta desigualdad entre los ricos y los pobres es universal. Lo que nos pasa a nosotras les pasa a mucha gente. Por ello, para vivir plenamente lo presente y soñar nuestro futuro y el futuro de todos los pobres del mundo, tenemos que hacer dos cosas.

Primero, tenemos que creer como María, que aunque sabía que su hijo iba a nacer pobre cantaba que algún día los ricos serían destronados.

En segundo lugar, tenemos que enlazarnos con los otros pobres. En particular, con los nuevos inmigrantes que llegan de México y Centroamérica, con los campesinos, con los trabajadores y las trabajadoras pobres. Tenemos que apoyar las luchas de otros pobres dentro del país, como el pueblo indígena, los negros, y las maquiladoras. Y tenemos que llevar nuestros esfuerzos a otros países, principalmente a El Salvador, Nicaragua y Sudáfrica. No podemos permanecer indiferentes, porque eso es apoyar la continuación de lo que existe. El empobrecimiento de las mujeres y de la gente de color se ha vuelto un fenómeno universal y creciente. Tenemos que tomar en cuenta también las luchas de la mujer blanca para ver qué podemos apoyar y aprender. Pero para poder hacer eso tenemos que desarrollar y definir nuestros propios problemas y puntos de vista, y establecer nuestras prioridades.

Nuestro mensaje ha de ser y de mostrar que Jesús resucitó, y que por él nosotras también hemos resucitado.

### Resumen

*En el presente ensayo se muestra la necesidad de unir en nuestro pensamiento, no solo las contribuciones del marxismo y de los principios educativos de Freire, sino de igual modo los descubrimientos de la nueva ciencia. De ese modo es posible replantear, por ejemplo, las cuestiones relativas al materialismo y al espiritualismo, evitando los dualismos que tanto mal han hecho al pensamiento cristiano en los sistemas y planteamientos tradicionales.*

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En octubre de 1992, se cumplirán quinientos años de llegada de Colón a estas tierras. Para reflexionar sobre nuestro origen, nuestro presente y nuestra misión, el programa México-Americano de Perkins School of Theology invita a un simposio en Dallas, TX, del 16 al 18 de febrero de 1987, bajo el título de:

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